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INFRASTRUCTURE

President Karzai Launches Kabul Power Plant: On August 5, 2009, President Hamid Karzai opened the first 35 megawatt (MW) block of a 100 MW diesel power plant in Kabul, significantly expanding power to the capital and surrounding area. The U.S. Government-funded Tarakhil Power Plant will provide power to approximately 200,000 residents in Kabul in its first phase. When finished later this year, the plant will provide power to more than half a million people, enabling Afghans to light their homes and heat their houses.

At the opening of the ceremony, President Karzai, Minister Khan and Ambassador Eikenberry climbed the stairs to the generator control room, where the President activated one of the plant generators via a



U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, President Hamid Karzai, and Minister of Energy and Water Ismail Khan celebrate the launch of Tarakhil Power Plant.

PHOTO: USAID/Dan Wilkinson

computerized control console. U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry stated, "Greater access to electricity will improve economic opportunities and the quality of life for the citizens of Kabul." He added that the U.S. government is proud of America's contribution to the development of Afghanistan's energy sector, noting, "We will continue to make major investments designed to further Afghanistan's economic growth with our next major anticipated achievement being the reopening of the Kajaki Power Station in Hilmand Province."



Workers sort and pack cherries at Badam Bagh Demonstration Farm in Kabul to prepare them for export to India and the UAE. PHOTO: USAID/ASAP

AGRICULTURE

Afghan Cherries, Apricots, and Melons Exported to India and UAE: Afghan cherries, apricots, and melons from Kandahar, Wardak, and Parwan provinces are now being enjoyed by customers in India and the United Arab Emirates. To strengthen Afghanistan's agriculture sector, USAID is helping four Afghan traders to export fresh produce to buyers in New Delhi and Dubai. USAID linked the Afghan exporters with the buyers; provided technical assistance in sorting, grading, and packaging the fruit; assisted with export and customs documentation; and identified appropriate transport for the exports. In a two-week period, Afghan traders exported about

\$110,000 worth of fresh produce, including 11 metric tons of apricots to Dubai and 5 metric

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tons of apricots to New Delhi; one metric ton of cherries to Dubai and one metric ton of cherries to New Delhi; and 70 metric tons of melons to New Delhi.

In an effort to increase Afghanistan's exports, USAID negotiated special rates to ship the country's fresh produce to markets abroad. While the cherries and apricots traveled by air, the melons were exported from Kandahar through Pakistan to India in open trucks. USAID provided special packaging that reduced melon losses from 20 percent to a maximum of 5 percent. When international buyers see that Afghanistan can provide delicious, well-packaged fruit at a good price, exports will increase and the country's farmers will enjoy higher incomes and an improved standard of living.

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM

Providing Radios to Remote Kunar Villages: The majority of people in Afghanistan get their news and entertainment through radio, and it is particularly important for Afghans to have access to information during the 2009 election period. USAID is working with the local government in Kunar Province to deliver 20,000 solar-powered or windup radios to villagers in remote areas. With their new radios, villagers can tune in to local and regional FM radio stations, such as BBC and Voice of America Pashto-language service. These radios provide a link to the rest of Afghanistan and the world, helping Kunar residents become informed about issues that affect their lives.



Kunar Governor Wahidi distributes radios to village elders.

PHOTO: Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA)



A farmer checks on his bee hives in Darra. PHOTO: USAID/PRT Panjsher/Jeremy Lewis

Beekeeping in Panjsher Raises Incomes: Farmers in Panjsher Province now have a new opportunity to increase their incomes – beekeeping. Forty farmers from Darra District participated in a beekeeping training program and received three boxes of bees each to start their own hives. The farmers recently harvested their first crop. On average, each box yielded approximately 2.33 kg of honey, with a market value of \$20 per kg in Panjsher. The farmers should be able to get two crops of honey per year from their bees, with production increasing over time as hives expand. The farmers also said that they have observed increased fruit production in their orchards due to pollination from their bees.



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DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Anti-corruption Study Tour to Singapore Inspires Afghanistan's High Office of Oversight: Corruption remains one of Afghanistan's major obstacles to stability and sustainable development. In July 2008, President Karzai established the High Office of Oversight (HoO) to develop and implement an integrated anti-corruption strategy. This summer, senior officials from the HoO and other government agencies attended an anti-corruption training at the Singapore Civil Service College. As one of the foremost and advanced corruption-fighting



The Afghan delegation at the Civil Service College in Singapore.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

governments in the world, Singapore provided the delegation with the tools to combat corruption in Afghanistan.

While some members of the delegation were skeptical that such anti-corruption success could be realized in Afghanistan, they soon learned that just 40 years ago, Singapore suffered from one of the highest levels of corruption in the world. As the interactive training and visits to Singapore anti-corruption agencies continued, the HoO delegation realized that, with dedication and hard work, Afghanistan could join the ranks of Singapore. One delegate commented, "I am very inspired to make changes in Afghanistan," while another remarked, "We have much to do and I am sure that we can do it; this training has opened my eyes."

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Advancing Afghan Mobile Banking: Technological advances, such as mobile phone banking, empower Afghans and pave the way to a more stable and secure life. On August 11, Afghan banking and finance leaders came together with representatives from the Central Bank, including Governor Abdul Qadeer Fitrat, to celebrating the advent of mobile banking in Afghanistan. Through technical assistance facilitated by the United States Government, mobile banking will change the way Afghans conduct private and public business. Mobile banking puts new banking technology at the fingertips of wage earners from Hirat to Badakhshan and all places in between. Balances can be transferred between accounts at the



Participants demonstrate a mobile banking funds transfer as Central Bank Governor Abdul Qadeer Fitrat observes.

PHOTO: AED/Fiona Shukri

touch of a button, easing salary payment and other transactions, especially in rural areas where it is cost-prohibitive to build brick and mortar branches.

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Deputy U.S. Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone offered remarks at the opening of the conference, after which participants discussed draft regulations on mobile commerce. "Mobile banking represents the best of what the partnership between the Government of the United States and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is all about," Ambassador Ricciardone said. "In introducing a new technology that will help all Afghans earn, save and transfer money, the Afghan government is showing it is serious about improving the lives of all Afghans and advancing peace, justice and prosperity."

Dream and Achieve Begins Season Two: Having awakened Afghanistan's entrepreneurial spirit, Afghanistan's popular business reality TV show recently began its second season. Dream and Achieve helps entrepreneurs improve their businesses while educating viewers about the importance of the private sector. The first episodes of the second season showed highlights from interviews with 250 potential contestants in Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Mazari Sharif, Fayzabad, and Hirat. From these, Tolo TV will select 24 finalists to compete and be judged on their business ideas, plans, and strategies. These entrepreneurs will receive assistance from leading business development



A *Dream and Achieve* contestant. PHOTO: Tolo TV

services to conduct market assessments and draft business plans. The show also features educational segments on starting and growing small businesses in Afghanistan. *Dream and Achieve* airs Sundays at 8 pm on Tolo TV.



A team of volleyball players that received assistance from the Samangan IIFC. PHOTO: USAID/World Council of Credit Unions

Samangan IIFC Sponsors Three Volleyball Teams:

The Government of Afghanistan and local communities have limited resources to support sportsmen and sportswomen in remote areas of the country, such as the northern province of Samangan. To fill this void, the Samangan Islamic Investment and Finance Cooperative (IIFC) recently donated balls, nets, and uniforms to three volleyball teams. IIFCs are community-based, member-owned institutions that provide a range of Islam-compliant financial services to their members. The contribution was funded through IIFC profits and constitutes the IIFC's zakat, (charitable contribution) to its surrounding community in keeping with Islamic values.

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Community outreach, such as this recent support to the volleyball teams, further strengthens the relationship between the communities and the IIFCs, leading to the long-term sustainability of IIFC financial services. Members of the volleyball teams are now registered with the IIFCs and have access to a range of financial services in their province. Twenty-eight IIFCs and points of service are currently operating in 11 provinces, reaching over 37,000 members.

First Potato Chips Produced in Eastern

Afghanistan: In August, A Sail Food Products Company began producing Eastern Afghanistan's first potato chips. Previously, customers could only buy potato chips imported from Pakistan. With equipment provided by USAID, the Afghan company is able to produce and package tasty chips in a modern and hygienic manner. The factory will provide potato farmers with new domestic sales opportunities, in addition to creating employment and generating new incomes in the local economy.



Equipment used for potato chip production at A Sail Food Products.

PHOTO: USAID/ASMED

HEALTH

E-learning for Midwives: Midwives, crucial healthcare providers who help mothers deliver healthy babies, now have a new tool to build their skills and knowledge. On July 22, USAID launched an e-learning module for midwives on active management of the third stage of labor. Future e-learning programs in counseling skills and immediate newborn care are currently under development. These modules, along with 51 computers provided by USAID, will be used to support midwifery training programs in the provinces of Khost, Bamyan, Badakhshan, Paktya, Jawzjan, Takhar, Kabul, Hirat, and Ghor. In addition, the module will be available to other midwifery education programs throughout the country.



E-learning module for midwives.

The event was opened by Minister of Public Health Dr. Sayed M. Amin Fatimie, who stressed the importance of e-learning as a way for midwifery students to supplement their learning and thanked USAID for its support. After the Minister's speech, USAID Representative Sara Smith stated, "We hope that this new learning technology will pave the way for even further improvement in the health status of women, children, and families of Afghanistan. The U.S. government supports your heroic work to improve health care for Afghanistan's citizens. We hope to see results for years to come, in the form of growing children, healthy mothers, and intact families."

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EDUCATION

Humanities Lesson Plan Training Guides
Teachers and Students: Proper lesson plan
development is key to ensuring that students gain a
firm grasp of the subjects they are learning, and can
build on that knowledge in the future. In late June,
USAID began trainings to help secondary school
educators develop and implement lesson plans
covering humanities classes for grades seven through
nine. Ultimately reaching more than 13,200 middle
and upper school teachers by the end of September
2009, USAID is now working with teachers in groups
of 20 throughout 11 provinces. By the end of the 12day training, each teacher will have prepared 17
lesson plans, as well as discussed some of the



Humanities teachers work together to develop lesson plans.

PHOTO: USAID/BESST

fundamental challenges specific to teaching the following humanities subjects: Dari language, Pashto language, English language, history, geography, and Islamic studies.

One female teacher in Jalalabad realized how valuable the experience was on the third day of this training. She said, "I was like a blind person, trailing the students behind me without knowing where I was going. Now, I will know how to produce lesson plans and specific learning objectives; these will guide me—and I will know where I am leading my students."